town and country church

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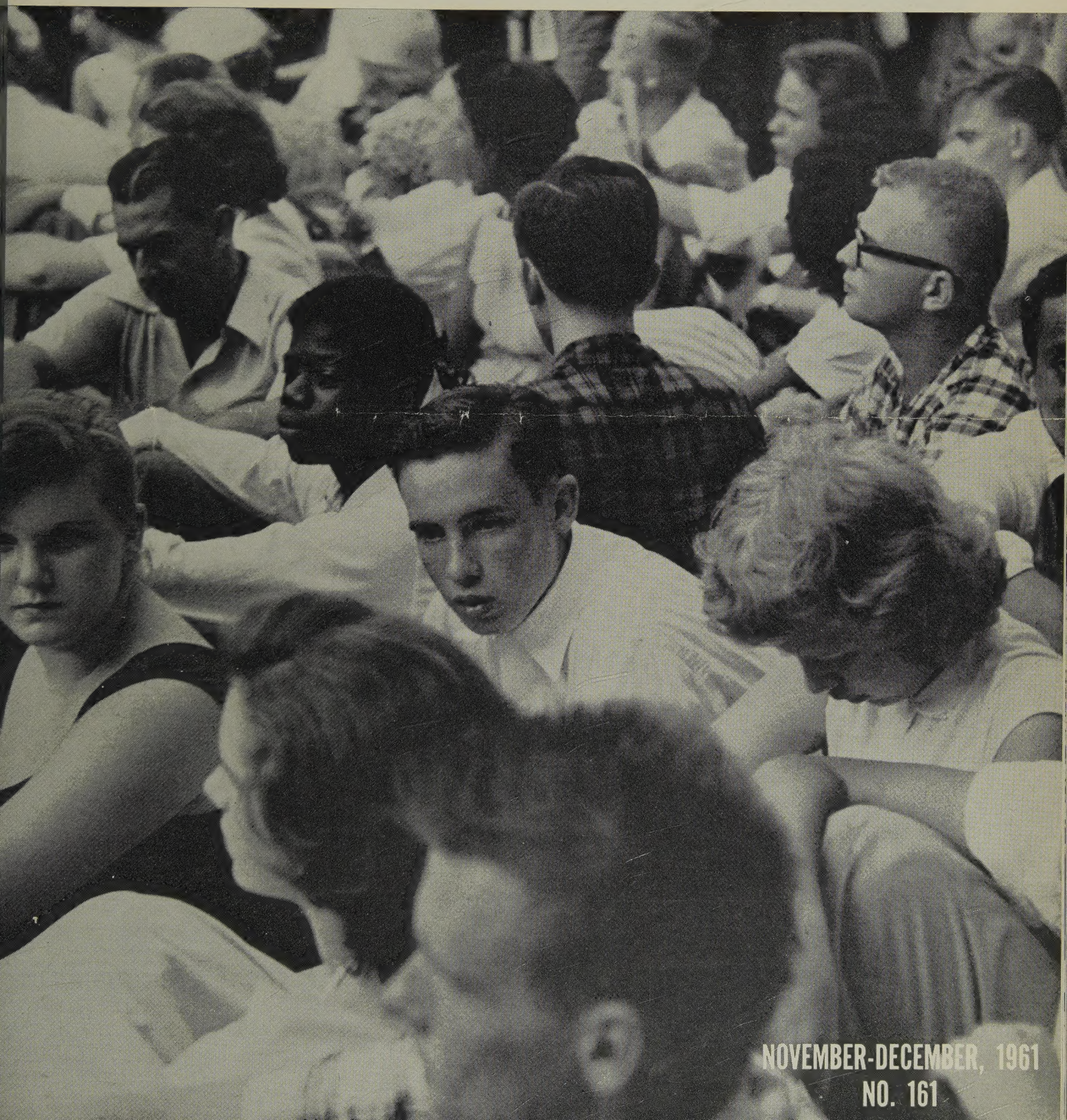

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1961
NO. 161

Purposes: To encourage cooperation among rural churches • to improve local church administration in organization, finance, education, community relations, and lay leadership training • to help develop a Christian philosophy of rural life embracing ethical issues in agriculture, social reconstruction, and government

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Cover

Cover photograph, an Episcopal Church photo, is by Martin Leifer.

IN THIS ISSUE . . .

• Do you notice how thoughtful and alert the young people look on our cover? Perhaps some of them are thinking, "What will I do with my life in the future?" Now, notice that the young people pictured on page three have already decided their future for Christ. But what about other young people—maybe even your son or daughter? And why are so few rural churches sending workers into Kingdom work (a reversal of our past record)? Recently a most significant consultation on vocation and enlistment was held. The better to understand the broad implications of the doctrine of vocation, and to discover means that will meet the current demand for church-related vocations, you will want to read Graydon McClellan's article.

The many friends of Mark Rich will be interested in his new responsibility. Continuing education is a must if our town and country pastors expect to keep relevant.

Most of us only get an image of a young person when considering the personnel needed for mission work —especially when it is particularly difficult. However, you will learn about a couple who retired earlier in life than most do so they can devote some years to the mission field. There are probably a great many people in this category; why not show them the way?

Negro Baptists are not waiting around for the government to do the church's work. Curious?

This issue contains a variety of helps for Thanksgiving and Christmas sermons and programs. And "Some Penetrating Insights" quoted on page thirteen could ignite several sermons.

We have introduced you to several denominational town and country executives—and this will continue. But a category of rural heroes which we also want you to know is the professors and teachers of rural work in colleges and seminaries. This month you will meet Dr. Victor Obenhaus. Because he has played an essential role in the rural church movement, his report on a study of churches is especially vital.

The fact that Dr. E. W. Mueller has been given significant recognition by the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts only confirms what many of us have known for years. Among those who have labored fruitfully in the Lord's vineyard, none has been more productive than E. W. Mueller.

And don't forget to read the books we have reviewed! ■ ■

Contributors of articles to TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH speak for themselves and not for the National Council of Churches or sponsoring organizations.

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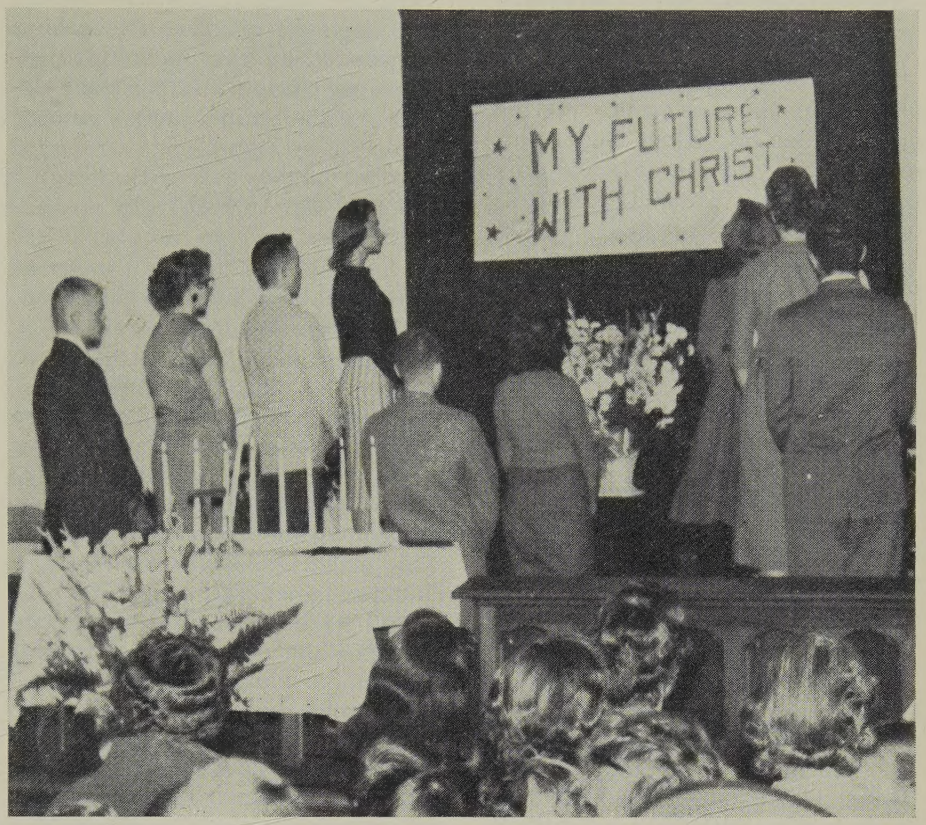
VOCATION, ENLISTMENT, & MINISTRY

by

Graydon E. McClellan



Youth of Burke-Lucas parish of Burke, South Dakota, in dedication service.

• There is a growing unanimity, very clearly evidenced at the Buck Hill Falls Staff Consultation on Vocation and Enlistment, that the theological context in which the churches must do their enlisting is Christian vocation. Under the merciless prodding of Professor William Lazareth of Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, even those who had been inclined previously to skip past Christian vocation to get on with recruiting found themselves in vigorous and fruitful encounter with their peers regarding this basic concept of Christian life and stewardship. They found that to pay more than lip service to it would necessarily alter the techniques, terminology, and literature of enlistment.

The Rev. Graydon E. McClellan, formerly executive director of the Department of the Ministry, NCCCUSA, is now General Presbyter of the New York Presbytery, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

I. Christian Vocation

Already Christian vocation is the underlying philosophy of the major denominational enlistment programs. The Episcopal Unit of Church Vocations speaks, for example, of

> the Biblical concept of Christian vocation that every Christian is called to faith, repentence and to a ministry of service *in* and *to* the world *in* and *through* the fellowship which is the body of Christ. This calling is to be exercised by all Christians. It is only in the light of such an understanding of Christian vocation that the Church can develop and prosecute its task of recruiting men and women for Church vocation.

Only occasionally is a church occupation still referred to as "full-time Christian service" by enlistment personnel. Amongst pastors and laymen, however, not only the term but also the special halo that goes with it are much too common. This has created a negative reaction among college youth (and college pastors) who have made some theological explorations with regard to career choice and who reject the implied downgrading of lay occupations.

II. The Call to Church Occupations

With reference to the call to church occupations, one of the discussion groups at Buck Hill Falls agreed that "there is still the need for the tap on the shoulder." American Baptist thought on the call illustrates this emphasis on the role of the church. A recent study paper written by a Baptist theologian says,

> The church should always be watchful for signs of the divine vocation in one of its members. The calling should not be announced by the individual to the

church, as is so often done today, but rather it should come through the church to the individual who has been called. Self-authentication is never sufficient. The church has the task of approving the gifts.

There is one significant area of uncertainty about the call, centering on the question, "Does God call a man uniquely to the ordained ministry?" Or, as it was summed up in one of the Buck Hill Falls sessions, "Is there a difference between the minister's call and that of others?" Renewed emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and on the ministry of the laity has prompted an influential number of enlistment specialists to answer in the negative. This does not represent a downgrading of the ordained ministry, but rather an upgrading of all useful occupations. Yet there are many in enlistment who are reluctant to go along with this answer, for it seems to surrender something of intrinsic worth in the life of the church.

III. Enlistment

The trend is definitely toward strong denominational enlistment offices in the churches of the United States, and in recent months several new offices have been opened, experimental offices have been enlarged and made permanent, and studies have been initiated preparatory to establishing full-blown enlistment endeavors.

It was recognized in all the conversations from which this report is drawn that enlistment basically is not for *denominational* mission and ministry so much as for mission and ministry *on behalf of the total church,* and that we have come to the time when enlistment must be implemented through more united endeavors.

IV. The "Image"

There is some annoyance at the use of the terms "image of the minister," "image of the missionary," "image of the Christian education director," and so forth, but the word image used in this way still says something important to the enlistment personnel, namely this: the pictures which people have of these church leaders are important for enlistment. A distorted image can deter enlistment and a soundly drawn image can inspire enlistment.

On the whole, it would appear that often the churches are seeking by twentieth century methods to enlist young people for positions defined along nineteenth century lines.

V. Vocational Guidance and Enlistment

The vocational guidance program in the public schools of this country is expanding tremendously.

All of this emphasis on guidance counseling in the schools means that our young people of the churches will be growing up in a culture where a career decision's validity may be questioned unless it has been related to the counseling process. This makes it imperative that the churches incorporate counseling concepts in their enlistment programs and that the churches keep school counselors informed about career choices and about the philosophy of Christian vocation as related to career choice for Protestant young people. It also makes it imperative that the churches provide professionally sound literature on church occupations for distribution on an interdenominational basis to the guidance counselors for their use with the young people. There is no thought that the guidance counselors will take over the enlistment task of the churches, any more than there is the thought that the guidance counselors will take over the enlistment tasks of industry, medicine, or nursing. It would be tragic, however, if the churches remained essentially unrelated to this endeavor, in contrast to the other professions.

The Department of the Ministry of the National Council of Churches is preparing four vocational guidance filmstrips, based on the concept of Christian vocation, as an aid to church young people in making sound career choices. These filmstrips, to be produced by Cathedral Films, will not be essentially enlistment material, although one strip will deal with church occupations. The titles of the four filmstrips are: "Youth and the Meaning of Vocation," "Youth and the World of Work," "Youth and Church Vocations," and "Youth and the Family in Vocational Decision." The Department of the Ministry is also working with Science Research Associates in developing a vocational guidance workbook for students, a workbook which several of our member denominations plan to use as helps for their church young people preparing them for career choosing in terms of Christian vocation. These handbooks are expected to be on sale by Science Research Associates in the fall of 1962.

The idea of incorporating vocational guidance methods in the enlistment for church occupations is disturbing to some people on the basis that this kind of thinking, somehow, is an impertinence to the work of the Holy Spirit, perhaps actually an interference with that work. In answer to such objection, the following would summarize the thought of enlistment personnel on this matter:

1) The church is the arena of the Holy Spirit for calling young people to church occupations.
2) The idea of counseling young people rather than overwhelming them by emotional pressure into such careers is here to stay.
3) The churches must involve themselves in the counseling process as a part of their enlistment program.
4) When the church does this, the church is still the arena of the Holy Spirit in calling young people to church occupations. It is not valid to think that the Holy Spirit works less directly in a counseling situation, simply because men have set up such a situation, than in an emotional conference or retreat—which men, incidentally, also have set up.

VI. Theological Education and Enlistment

There is some indication in the churches that the emerging concept of enlistment involves a close relationship to theological education. This can be seen in part by the fact that nearly all the Department-of-

the-Ministry-related enlistment offices have close liaison with theological education in their denominations.

VII. Continuing Education

Continuing education, coming after a man qualifies for ordination and is in the pastorate, is a means of staying alive and creative, intellectually as well as spiritually, and it is coming in for major attention among the churches. Some indication of the importance being attached to continuing education can be found by reading a survey report by Professor Connolly C. Gamble, Jr., Director of Continuing Education, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va., which he published in 1960 as a result of a survey he made on his sabbatical study year. A limited number of copies of this study can be secured by writing to Dr. Gamble. [For some denominational work in this area, see the article on Mark Rich on page six of this issue.]

VIII. Placement Services

Placement is still generally separate from enlistment in the churches, but there is evidence that a shift may be occurring. For example, the Disciples of Christ developed their remarkable guidance and recruitment program in their placement office. Several Department-of-the-Ministry-member units in the denominations have placement for non-ordained church career people related to their offices.

IX. United Efforts in Vocation and Enlistment

Nearly every interdenominational conversation where vocation and enlistment have been discussed to any extent has suggested in one way or another that the time has come for more intercommunion cooperation in this area.

X. The Nature and Practice of Christian Ministry

Interestingly enough, it is churchmen who have a great affection for the pastoral ministry, and who are committed to this ministry as the hope for renewal in the life of the church, who are the most obviously disturbed commentators on the shortcomings of pastoral ministry as practiced in our time. These same churchmen are also intrigued by the possibilities of the renewal of the church through a new and creative partnership between a theologically equipped laity and an enlightened ordained pastoral leadership. The following summary of disturbing appraisals which have been made regarding Christian ministry across this country helps to explain some of the urgency about the discussion on the nature and practice of Christian ministry.

A. The local church is called to be a mission point in a largely pagan society—yet often it would seem to be a private religious club with its own chaplain; a middle-class enclave bulwarked against social adulteration; a liturgical in-group having no relevance to those "outside the camp."

B. The gospel teaches believers to be the church in dispersion—yet church membership tends to huddle believers together into building-centered programs. If one could be sure that these tremendous building programs were resulting in Christianizing the communities where they are carried on, there would be real cause for rejoicing. However, self-congratulations among churchmen are quickly chilled when they realize that in most of these wonderfully churched communities it is well nigh impossible for a Negro to purchase or rent a house.

C. The church is ministry—yet at times it would seem that the ministry of the laity has been defaulted to the clergy.

D. "Do not be conformed to this world," wrote St. Paul—yet rather than the local church shaping the mind of the community, it would often seem that it is minding the shape of the community's culture.

E. Perhaps parish or local ministry was well suited to eighteenth or nineteenth century society—but can it be adapted to the demands of an industrial society that seems to bear no relationship to parish living? We are very successful in the United States in gathering a community of pious people into one spot, but their coming together has all too little relevance to what goes on in our industrial society.

XI. The Ministry of the Laity

The one question that stimulates the most interest is that of the place of the layman in the ministry of the church. Serious students of the matter do not regard this concern to be a fad, a sport interest that will die. It is felt that it may be the harbinger of a new reformation of the church. We can hope that this is the case, for the answer to the above question, along with the implementation of that answer, is the key to the renewal of the church in our time.

Dr. Lazareth devoted a large portion of his three addresses to the place of the layman in the ministry of the church, for he felt that an understanding at this point was fundamental to an understanding of the place of the ordained in the ministry of the church and to a sound enlistment program. "The word laity must not be understood as a merely negative way of meaning those church members who are not clergymen," he said. "Though not fully articulated, a much more positive meaning of the ministry of the laity, the *ministry* of the laity, is rapidly gaining acceptance. The very phrase 'the ministry of the laity' expresses the privilege of the whole church to share in Christ's ministry to the world, no matter where they are or who pays their salary. It is they who bridge the gulf between the church and the world."

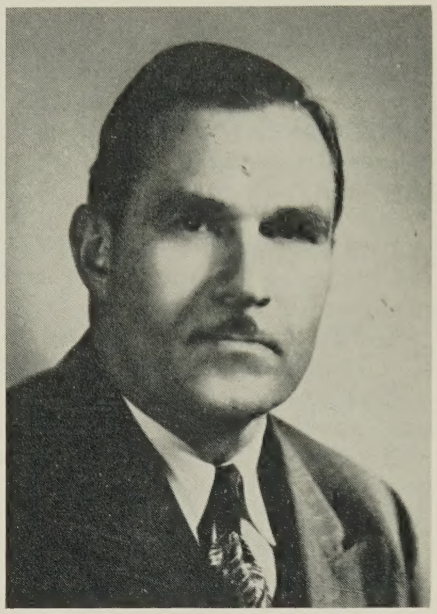
It is highly possible that a new thrust in theological education may grow out of this vigorous discussion of the ministry of the laity. There has been a tendency on the part of theological seminaries to train chaplains for private religious clubs. We may be readying theological education now to train men to be "ministers to ministering communities." This may call for a radical reorientation in some cases in the field of pastoral theology, but nothing short of this will do for the coming days in the life of the church. ■ ■

Mark Rich Chosen to Head "Continuing Education"

• Named director of the new continuing - education - for - pastors program of the American Baptist Board of Education and Publication is Dr. Mark Rich, Columbia, Missouri. His appointment was announced at a board of managers meeting May 17.

Since 1952, Dr. Rich has been professor of rural church at the Missouri School of Religion. Prior to that he served for fourteen years as secretary of town and country work for the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, founding the Rural Church Center at Green Lake, Wisconsin, and the Commission on Rural Advance.

He is a graduate of Linfield College, Oregon, Colgate Rochester Divinity School, New York, and earned M.A. and PH.D. degrees at Cornell University, New York. Author of four books, Dr. Rich led a rural churchman's tour of Europe in 1953.



The continuing education program for all New England A.B.C. pastors will begin in 1962, according to Dr. Lynn Leavenworth, A.B.C. director of theological education.

The program, initiated by the New England Council on the Ministry, will provide refresher courses in Bible and theology, individual counseling and group discussion on the personal role of a pastor, and suggestions for future study. Every Baptist pastor in New England will be invited to a two-weeks residence session of this sort once every five years.

Aim of the program is not so much to increase skills for running the church as to develop new interests, habits of reflection, study, research, and creative leadership to help the men and women become better ministers of Jesus Christ, Dr. Leavenworth explains. If remedial or advance training is indicated for a particular pastor, it will be recommended and he will be encouraged to make definite plans to get it before his next session at the education institute.

The New England program will be financed for its first five years by a grant from CHEC (the Christian Higher Education Challenge), plus funds from the states and fees from the pastors. ■ ■

An Opportunity of Service

(for those who would and could retire early)

• For thousands living in the squalor of crowded, makeshift huts in British Honduras, a better life is in sight.

The impoverished masses in this colony on the Caribbean coast of Central America will be helped on the long road to self-sufficiency by Church World Service, through a greatly expanded program of relief and rehabilitation.

Mr. and Mrs. Murray W. Meador of Holton, Kansas, have gone to Belize, capital of British Honduras, to set up and administer the C.W.S. program. They will serve as the first full-time coordinators for C.W.S. in British Honduras.

The husband and wife team will not confine their work to Belize, but will extend the C.W.S. ministry of compassion to reach, for the first time, the destitute in outlying areas of the colony.

Agricultural development, handicraft projects, education, and social casework will be included in the rehabilitation program being set up by the Meadors.

Prior to the assignment of full-time coordinators, the only C.W.S. work that had been feasible was a limited relief program carried out on a voluntary basis by Lady Betty Thornley, wife of the governor of the colony, Sir Colin Hardwick Thornley.

Murray and Mildred Meador took an intensive four-month course at Koinonia Foundation, Baltimore, a non-denominational Christian training center for persons preparing for service in areas of critical need.

The Meadors bring to their work a long experience in serving their church and community. They have been active in the First Methodist Church of Parsons, Independence First Methodist Church, and the Methodist Church of Holton, all in Kansas, where they have lived.

Mr. Meador received an award for his leadership in area Boy Scout work. He has also been a leader in civic clubs and chambers of commerce. During World War II he was stationed in Panama for two years.

Mrs. Meador, a teacher before her marriage and again during the war, has served as an assistant Y.W.C.A. secretary.

Associated with the J. C. Penney Co. for thirty-seven years, Mr. Meador chose early retirement so he and his wife could seek an opportunity to devote their full time to Christian service.

The Meadors have two sons, Murray Jr., a physician in Kansas City, Missouri, and Marlin, an architect in Tucson, Arizona, and four granddaughters.

—G. E. BLACKFORD
Church World Service,
Public Relations

U.S. NEGRO BAPTISTS PLAN "MINIATURE PEACE CORPS"

• A three-man commission of the largest Negro Baptist convention in the United States has left New York to establish a "miniature peace corps" in Liberia.

The delegation of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., which has a membership of five million, hopes to acquire five thousand acres of farmland on which young American Negroes will be encouraged to settle, become Liberian citizens if they so desire, and aid in the country's economic development.

The project, which has the support of the Liberian consulate in New York, was recommended by the convention's president, Dr. Joseph H. Jackson of Chicago, and was adopted by the body's executive board in 1959.

At the commission's departure, Dr. Jackson noted that his denomination has had missionaries in Liberia for years, "but our missionary programs must of necessity change, and we want to channel some mission money into new fields."

Meanwhile, David M. Thomas, consul general of Liberia, expressed personal satisfaction "to see this thing materialize," and indicated that any number of volunteers would be welcome. He pointed out that his country has a sparsely settled interior, with a population of 2,500,000 on its forty-three thousand square miles, and has fertile land for growing rubber and coffee.

Dr. Jackson said applicants will not be asked if they are Baptists. An effort will rather be made to interest U.S. Christians who are specialists in *farming and light industry* to settle on the new property and aid the country economically so that the Christian witness will be more effective.

In addition to this international project, the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., has made the final payment on Freedom Farm in Somerville, Tennessee, which was purchased to resettle Negro families who had been evicted from their tenant farms last winter, allegedly because they had registered to vote in last November's elections. Dr. J. H. Jackson, convention president, said the four-hundred-acre farm was acquired at a cost of $60,000 as the first step in a long-range plan to help Negro sharecroppers become prosperous farmers. The property was paid for in six months.

—*Ecumenical Press Service,* Geneva

YOU AND THE U.S. CENSUS

• The decennial census of population conducted by the Bureau of the Census of the federal government is the greatest single source of fact about America, its people, and its regions and communities. The detailed returns on the 1960 Census are coming out now.

The Bureau of Research and Survey of the National Council has scheduled two enlarged issues of *Information Service* to report on the Census findings as they relate to the churches. The first, published October 29, 1960, covers the whole range of what the Census Bureau publishes and the schedule of publication and also lists the 1960 Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

The second special issue, planned for October or November of 1961, will be a report of Census findings as they relate to the churches. This bulletin will draw on the special reports made to the Conference on the 1960 Census and the Churches held in Washington May 10 to 12 of this year. There, top officials of the Census Bureau dealt at length with the facts and trends of 1960 as they relate to our work.

The special issues may be ordered from *Information Service,* N.C.C.C., 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27. They are priced at forty cents each. ■ ■

There is still time

in November to celebrate a Harvest Home Festival.

Copies of the 1961 order of service for Harvest Festival, written by the Rev. Dr. Clarence Jordan, director of Koinonia Farm, Americus, Georgia, are still available from:

Office of Publication & Distribution
National Council of Churches
475 Riverside Drive
New York 27, N. Y.

Note: All those who order the bulletin this year will also receive an especially prepared benediction by Clarence Jordan, which is suitable for framing.

Concerning Christmas - - -

Winston Pote from A. Devaney, N. Y.

and memory

Above all other things, to me
Christmas Eve means memory;
Shifting scenes that come and go
Like faint, sweet bells across the snow,
Flakes of memory, drifting down
On the friendly roofs of a little town;
Candle-lit windows through which one sees
Firelight mirrored on tinseled trees;
A mantel, with stockings hanging there,
And whispered laughter upon the stair;
The smell of spice through all the house,
And the crisp, clean scent of hemlock boughs;
Snow's fingertips at the windowpane,
And a voice, long mute, that speaks again.
Each Yuletide season becomes a part
Of the treasure stored in a childish heart.
I ask for mine, though their road wind far,
No other light than the shepherds' star.

—Anonymous

and justice

There was peace in the world when Jesus was born,
But it was a peace purchased at the price of slavery and injustice.
The influence of Jesus is always devisive —when confronted with such a peace
"I came to send a sword. . . ."
His peace is only based on good will.
Herod knew this—and tried to kill him.

and judgment

Christmas is like great art and beauty—we do not judge it, it judges us.

Any other man in flesh can never be common or inferior, for even God chose this covering in the incarnation.

How can a dream, an image, an idea exist unless it be incarnate in flesh, perhaps even in a book or an institution?

To appreciate a book is to reincarnate the author in ourselves.

Jesus nowhere asked his disciples to remember his birth—even though most men today prefer to do so—and, as is the case of the memory of greatness, rather to remember his death—and not a glorious death, at that.

Not to watch the clock or even the calendar, but to conquer all of the inner soul and all of outer space is the form of readiness that is the true preparation for the return of Christ.

—Fred R. Chambers

and blessing

Blessed are the . . .
Cheerful,
for they drive the dark of doubt away;
Helpful,
for they enable hope to spring eternal;
Respectful,
for they make visible the nature of love;
Ideal,
for they reveal the pattern for striving;
Sensitive,
for they release the healing power;
Thankful,
for they renew the wellsprings of mercy;
Musical,
for they maintain the angel's song;
Adaptable,
for they make possible the dominion of the earth;
Spiritual,
for they establish the eternal values.
Thus may we be as our gift to God and others.

—Henry A. McCanna

and prayer

Today we rejoice, for thou dear God hast given us a Saviour; May the heavenly messengers be heard anew by us and all others; Humbly we pray that thou wilt cause the spirit of the Prince of Peace to encompass our world and still the tempest caused by the surging passions of hate; And be thou among us in a manner that will stimulate our concern unto living a life of love; In the name of Jesus who would save his people from their sins. *Amen.*

and peace on earth

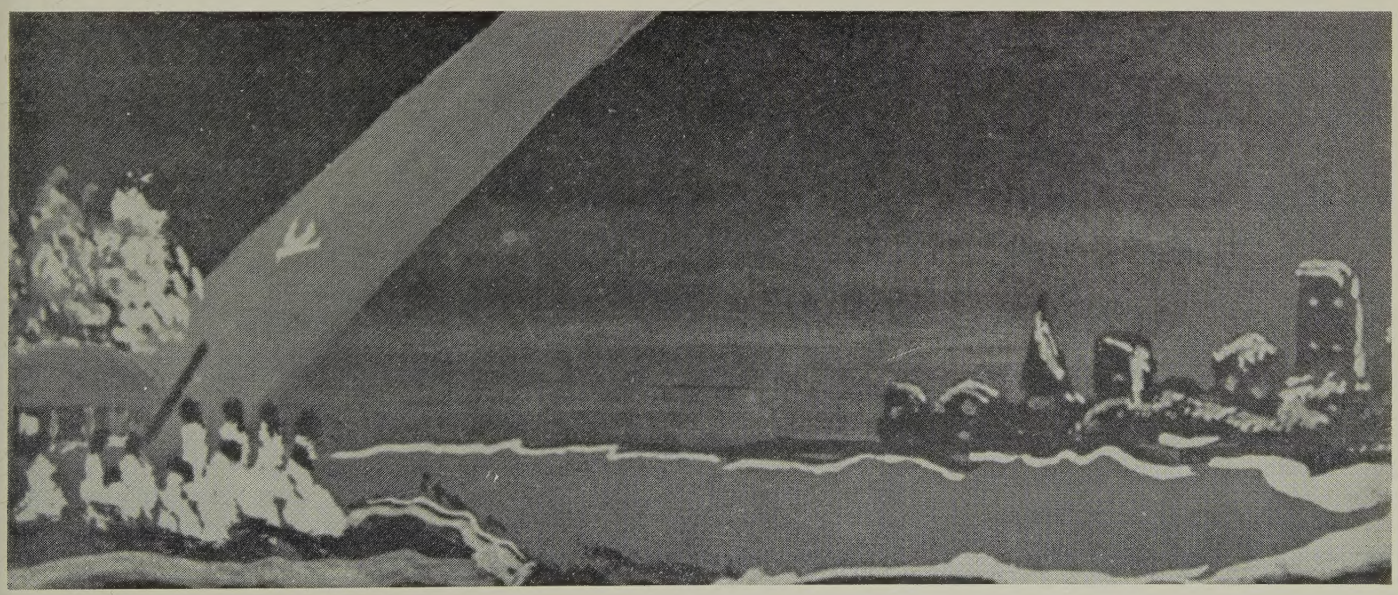
Shown below is "Peace on Earth," a World Christian Art Christmas Card by Sug Kie Song, a rural layman of Korea, published by the Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature, Room 670, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27.

The World Christian Art Christmas Cards are selected by a jury vote at an annual competition. Out of twenty-four entries from thirteen countries, the 1961 selections are THE CLEARING, by Solomon Saprid of the Philippines, and PEACE ON EARTH, by Sug Kie Song of Korea.

Mr. Song's rural church in Chulwon, Korea, has had a long struggle to survive. Begun in 1920, it was located so close to the thirty-eighth parallel that war pushed its congregation back and forth between Red and U.N. control. Eventually, the town and church were wiped out so that even the site of the church could barely be located. Then, about a thousand homes were rebuilt some ten miles from the city, outside the military zone.

A pastor was called, and the congregation began to hold regular meetings again. Today, thanks to help from U. S. Christians, a new church gives valiant service to a large congregation. It is small wonder that Mr. Song's thoughts, expressed visually, suggest peace and trust as found in the starry heavens. Mr. Song came with his pastor to the local American missionary to receive his prize of $100. Writes the missionary, "He was highy pleased with the prize, which probably represents a year's income."

Sug Kie Song's entry came without previous contact, with a small note attached, which, translated, read: "I am not an artist. I am in a rural church. I have painted what I have been thinking." The serenity and quiet Mr. Song has captured in his sky-seascape drew such concentrated approval that it was selected over many fine professional designs. The card itself carries on it the artist's own title. There is reassurance in the fact that a painting so expressive of peace on earth has come through the Christian church of war-torn Korea.



The Gap Between the Churches and Agriculture

by Victor Obenhaus

• The lowly gap is again coming into its own. It has not had so much popularity since Cumberland Gap opened the West to migration. It took the latest thing in electronics, however, to discover its new importance. In a figurative and symbolic sense it is the distance between Cumberland Gap and the Missile Gap with which we are concerned here today. As Cumberland Gap symbolizes the pioneer, the frontier, the highly personalized and individual salvation-center religion of the frontiersmen, the missile gap symbolizes the proximity and interlocking of the human race. It is illustrated by the fact we do not dare use the missile because in destroying an enemy we destroy ourselves.

The Agricultural Revolution

Our concern is with churches and the agricultural revolution. There are a number in this audience who can remember that it was anxiety over the fate of the rural church which produced the town and country movement, backed by Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot and others, and which in turn gave rise to a whole new era of research related to religious institutions. Today, interestingly, approximately fifty years later, the urban church finds itself in the same situation and it now is engaged in a titanic struggle to enable the institution of the church to become relevant to urban life in an industrial society.

I make this point because the rural church had almost a half-century head start in its concern for this problem, yet I have to report it has made very little headway in dealing with the fundamental issues. It has made adaptations and, what was called in our assignment for this address, "adjustments." But actually in the light of the technological and ideological revolution which has been going on in America it has made very little contribution.

It is not my purpose to attach blame for this gap between the major developments in agriculture and the ideological framework of rural church people. May I be brash enough, however, to say that, if agriculturalists had applied the scientific advances in their field *only* to the degree that the country church availed itself of its new resources, American agriculture would be bankrupt. In the same breath one has to add that the same people are involved.

The Pattern of Settlement

The study of the origin, the rise, the full period of achievement, and the subsequent decline of institutions is a fascinating study by itself. Local churches are not any different in this respect from most other institutions, except for their greater tenacity in hanging onto life. I am here presuming that every local church is a part of the larger fellowship of the Church Universal. In its local form it began as an idea.

Basically that idea was to provide people with an opportunity to relate themselves in a meaningful way to God and neighbor. In a newly settled area, so our patterns of settlement in this country reveal, the various nationality groups planted their churches, and thus they served as both a place of worship and a tie with those who spoke their language.

The evolution and the blending of these forms constitutes one of the exciting facets of Americana. There was a time when many of these differentials were important. Today many of them have disappeared into a common blend.

The single fact yet remains that originally all of them evolved from a determination to serve God and their fellow men. This is the principal purpose of the church. The difficulty stems from the fact that the intimate and personal God is also the God of interstellar space and of the mind which can explore it. One's neighbor is not the one who is nigh in distance—he is in Katanga Province or Usbeck or Outer Mongolia, much nearer, by voice at least, than his farming neighbor down the road at the time his church was established.

A Need to Adjust

A part of our assignment is to describe "what the churches are doing to adjust to new and different demands." With but a few exceptions one must confess these adjustments have been largely *to* the conditions created by our agricultural revolution rather than in giving direction to it, which, it is my thesis, should be one of its primary responsibilities. By virtue of its origins, its depth of experience in meaningful occupational activity, its proximity to the creative process, and its awareness of the meaning of family life—all of this beyond its own environs as well as for itself—the rural church should be providing leadership and direction for agriculture and its related processes.

Let me quickly say that I know full well the major decisions of agriculture are not made in agricultural areas. Today they are made in the cities and in the governmental centers. It is my contention, however, that rural church people have abdicated much of the decision-making process in rural life for the very reason that they have stressed the secondary aspects of the life of their churches and neglected those which are primary.

The other part of my original assignment was to indicate "the impact of the declining rural population on Protestant churches."

I must give a response somewhat different from that implied in the assignment. No one here is wringing his hands over the dilemma of declining rural population—we have become accustomed to it and accept

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Presented to the National Farm Institute, Des Moines, Iowa, February 17-18, 1961.

it. But there is another angle to it. The very fact of the declining rural population places added burdens upon those who are left, if they are going to make a significant contribution through their churches.

Must Take an Objective Look

The fundamental problem of the church in town and country is the nature of the church itself. The declining rural population is caught in a real squeeze at this point. The very fact of its decline would seem to make it increasingly apparent that it must consider with others the justification for maintaining so many separate units and so divided a witness. But at the same time the very decline in numbers seems to accentuate in all organizations the inability to look objectively at the reasons for decline or to be genuinely understanding of the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

I experienced an illustration of this a few months ago. In an agricultural county which had been losing population for many years, there are seventy-two churches. Many of them have less than ten members each. Into this county has come the largest single-unit power plant of its kind in the world. It employs eighty men and dumps its power more than two hundred miles away from the source of its production. But the personnel manager of this plant, the very symbol of unification and concentration of people and power, is actively attempting to form another church, since his particular sect does not have a branch in that vicinity.

It became apparent to some of us who are concerned about the role of the church in modern-day agricultural life that we ought to try to get the facts about the beliefs, convictions, loyalties of people who live and work in an agricultural atmosphere, thus trying to discern whether they differ greatly from each other. We chose what is a typical corn belt county, one which we believe can be compared favorably with any one of the 468 counties which make up the corn belt. I shall not burden you with the method of the study but will simply say that it was made over a period of approximately five years, using the proper methods of interviewing. We used four different types of towns and two open-country townships, so that we might have a fair representation of farmers.

Differences Were Minimal

It was our suspicion that differences between denominations were minimal and that possibly other agencies than the church were actually shaping the thought and directions of this typical midwest county. Very important in our thinking was a desire to discover any relation between the religious understandings of these modern Midwesterners and their attitudes toward some present-day social issues.

We discovered, for example, that the amount of biblical understanding and information is exceedingly low in most denominations, and in those where it is higher most have little knowledge of its relevance for contemporary application.

We had thought that those churches which spend a great deal of time in religious training, so-called, would probably find their communicants better informed in matters of general biblical and religious response. Some have assumed that the use of liturgies, formal prayers, and more frequent reference to traditional religious concepts might fortify members with a greater measure of familiarity with the fundamentals of the faith. Such proves not to be the case. The participants in so-called liturgical churches are no better informed religiously and no better equipped to relate to the needs of our times than those who have had a quite different type of religious training.

Uniform Response

In matters involving theological comprehension, the nature of God, significance of Christ, the place of prayer, and such matters, there is an almost uniform response through all denominations, and this at quite a low level. Interestingly, though there is a very wide-spread appreciation of God as Creator, there was almost no suggestion that God is also Judge and Redeemer. It raises the question whether a self-sufficient people reinforced with modern technology find any notion of God as Judge conflicting with their own sense of competence and capacity to act wisely.

Of the twelve hundred interviewed, only 1 per cent or less could express any relationship between their faith and their civic responsibilities and community relationships.

Despite the fact that almost every major denomination has a social education and action department which tries to work through social concern committees and the local pastors—with the exception of one denomination's members who knew they were opposed to liquor and another which had a long record of pacifism—there was no awareness of anything their denomination had attempted to do in relation to the major issues in our times.

Finally, we had thought that the different types of denominational background would probably influence the ways of thinking and ways of relating to one's fellow men. It might be seen in differing responses to authority and different attitudes toward family life, etc. The fact is that the processes of Americanization, or whatever one may call them, have worked so effectively that there is no significant difference between any major denominational group insofar as their responses to group and family life, authority, sexual adjustment, and all of the rest are concerned.

What all this seems to say is that even the active participants in our churches have been so markedly influenced by a common culture, they no longer reflect any significant differences as a result of their backgrounds and denominational origins.

Difficult to Appraise Changes

To summarize what all of this means: Among the "problems of a changing rural society"—in addition to the technological changes due to scientific advances and the resulting decrease in the numbers engaged in farming—is the cultural homogenizing of both those who have left the farms and those who remain. Carried along as we are by the processes of change there is an absence of norms by which the changes themselves can be appraised. Hence, adjustment to

the changes has become the criterion of effectiveness and progressiveness. This, as you may have gathered from what I have said thus far, I do not regard as wholly bad, but I am suggesting it is at least unfortunate that the one institution responsible for ultimate values in our society has been something less than relevant in giving direction to the changes which have been taking place.

If the social and technological scientists, who in a large measure are themselves products of town and country churches, were to give a proportionate amount of attention to the nature of man in society inherent in the very depths of our Christian faith, there would be another revolution paralleling, supplementing, and enriching the technological revolution whose consequences we have noted.

Suggested Guides for Concern

Since my assignment deals primarily with rural churches I would suggest in closing three things for the town and country church and those who possess deep concern for its role in our national life.

1) A frank and comprehensive appraisal of our situation as agricultural people and our role in national life. This is more than an inventory of the changes which have taken place in agriculture. This is, rather, an analysis of the relation of agriculture to our national culture.

2) A recognition that our fundamental problem is a theological problem—that is, it has to do with the nature and destiny of man and of the society in which he lives. For many years we have been specializing in the study of the rural community. The word has become very fuzzy and often meaningless because our understanding of the term community has world-wide implications. A real test of the church is the quality of community life it fosters.

3) The church as we have come to think of it in rural communities may no longer be truly the church, or at best may be only a small reflection of the church as it really is. It is this rediscovery of the fundamental nature of the church which will enable the fellowship of God's people to make their witness in and perhaps even against some of the changes which have so profoundly influenced American rural life.

There are some highly encouraging signs which portend significant developments in rural churches. Some of these I mentioned earlier. In the long run, perhaps, even more important is the dawning realization that the future of our American rural life, our national economy, is inseparably tied through our history itself to the very nature and mission of the church. The costly rediscovery of this fact may re-affirm some old directions and provide us with some new. At any rate, we shall be asking the basic question about the nature of man and the kind of a society he must construct to be true to the understanding of himself.

This, then, is the primary function of the church. I am extremely partisan in expressing the hope that rural churches, even in a fast changing rural society, may again give some direction to the life of our town and country people and, hence, to our nation and thus inevitably to the world. ■ ■

so you may know . . .

VICTOR OBENHAUS

PRESENT RELATIONSHIP:

Associate professor, the Church in Agricultural and Industrial Life, Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago and the Chicago Theological Seminary

Beginning date of present association with University of Chicago: July, 1944

FIELD:

Ethics and Society

DEGREES:

A.B.—Oberlin College, 1925

B.D.—Union Theological Seminary, 1929

M.A.—Columbia University, 1929

ED.D.—Columbia University, 1940

PREVIOUS PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS:

Assistant minister, Church of the Covenant, Cleveland, Ohio, 1929-1936

Member, ministerial staff, Riverside Church, New York, 1936-38

Principal, Pleasant Hill Academy, Pleasant Hill, Tenn., 1938-44

CHURCH, DENOMINATIONAL, AND PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITIES:

Chairman, Council for Social Action, Congregational-Christian Churches, 1948-50

Chairman, Board of Directors, Merom Institute, Merom, Indiana

Member, Board of Trustees, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio

Member, Department of the Church and Economic Life, National Council of Churches

PUBLICATIONS:

The Hebrew Prophets and America's Conscience

The Responsible Christian, 1957

MEMBER OF:

American Sociological Society

Rural Sociological Society

Religious Research Fellowship

Speaking of Penetrating Insights . . . .

"The unleashed power
of the atom
has changed everything
except
our ways of thinking."
—ALBERT EINSTEIN, 1946

Professor C. G. Baeta of Ghana, president of the International Missionary Council, told a study group on the world-wide church that, since no country can be described as Christian, "the idea of one part of the world evangelizing another will not bear scrutiny."

"Missions are not a movement from the haves to the have-nots, from the educated to the illiterate," he said. "They are a movement from the fellowship of faith all over the world to all who stand outside this fellowship, whoever and wherever they may be."

—*Ecumenical Press Service*

Either a minister ought to conceive of his role as one that involves him deeply in the power structure of the community, or he ought not to be there. If he is simply a chaplain to small-town superficialities and personal gratifications, then he will never be involved enough in the community to seek its redemption.

—ROBERT SPIKE in
Safe in Bondage

A Department of Agriculture study shows that family farms may grow larger and even more efficient in the years to come but, like night baseball games, are here to stay.

The U.S.D.A. projection shows that farmers will continue to step up the adoption of labor-saving and out-put increasing techniques, will purchase more equipment needed for more complete mechanization, will hire more services, such as spraying, dusting, and fertilizing, and will obtain more professional management assistance.

Naturally, says the U.S.D.A., as the farms grow larger there will be fewer of them, but "greater use of these production materials and services will help farm operators to increase the size of their enterprises without losing their control of management."

How about the possibility of a qualitative definition of rural people, and the rural church? Instead of stating how many people in a given community, or how near they live to a metropolitan area, why not define rural people as people who live close to the backgrounds of field, forest, desert, or sea, and in whose lives the natural elements of created things play a dominant role? This would make rural include mining communities and resort communities, as well as areas that are largely agricultural.

—ROBERT L. CLINGAN, *Pastor*
McLean, N. Y., Community
Church

The basic difference between rural and urban organization is that, in the rural community, function is the basis for organization, while in the urban community an institution is established and it takes on functions.

—E. H. BAKKEN, Boy Scouts of
America, Director, Relationships Division

Those who wax poetic about the soil and sun may labor longer over their lines and rhymes than in the field. —WM. MIRENGOFF

Negroes are moving North,
Yankees are coming South,
Cotton has gone West,
Cattle are shifting East.

—EUGENE BUTLER in
This is the South by Robert
West Howard

A Tractor for Burma

At Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Kansas, a little more than a year ago, Dr. William Hackett, American Baptist missionary to Burma, spoke to a class of town-country students of the need for modern farm machinery in Burma. He told of his dream to establish rural Christian centers from which tools could be borrowed by responsible, needy farmers. His dream so thrilled the Alpha Chapter of the American Baptist Town-Country Fellowship that they immediately embarked on a campaign to raise the $1,660 a rebuilt tractor would cost. In their May, 1961, meeting the treasurer announced that more than enough money had been received and forwarded to Mr. Hackett's representative to buy and ship the tractor.

—Baptist Advance in Town
and Country

BOOK REVIEWS

Every Tribe and Tongue, Elsie C. Pickhard and Louisa R. Shotwell, New York, Friendship Press, 1960, $1.00 (paper).

In December of 1959, a most significant joint assembly of the Home and Foreign Missions divisions of the N.C.C. met at Atlantic City. The implications of this gathering have far reaching effects, and so an important service has been done in compiling this material.

Included in this book are the reflections of a carefully selected group of authors about the mission of the church at home and abroad, and especially of the fact that the mission is one.

This book is a must for discussion by church groups throughout the land.

Everyman's United Nations, United Nations, New York, 1959, $3.50.

A complete handbook of the functions and activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies (F.A.O., UNESCO, W.H.O., etc.) during the period 1945 to the end of 1958.

Everyman's is the accurate, unbiased, and complete story of the United Nations family—presented in a form that fulfills the needs both of the expert and the casual reader.

The impressive development of the role of the United Nations in all spheres of international life is unquestioned. Today, there is practically no international question on which anyone can claim to be properly informed unless his information includes the facts of U.N.'s participation—*Everyman's* provides those facts clearly, completely, and concisely.

Future plans provide for occasional, *supplementary* editions to bring the information contained in this edition of *Everyman's* up-to-date. Thus, this sixth edition will constitute the basic history of the organization and remain of permanent value.

Church Cooperation in the United States, Ross W. Sanderson, Hartford, Association of Council Secretaries, 60 Lorraine St., 1960, $3.50.

In 1870, in Westerly, Rhode Island, "seven pastors from Seventh Day Baptist to Episcopalian . . . had their pictures taken together to prove 'that the Church of Christ in Westerly is one,' though meeting, for reasons historical and practical, in seven congregations." This is but one illustration of early gropings toward local church cooperation cited in this book, *Church Cooperation in the United States.* The descriptive subtitle reads: "The Nationwide Backgrounds and Ecumenical Significance of State and Local Councils of Churches in Their Historical Perspective."

Dr. Sanderson writes out of forty years' experience as a participant–observer in local, state, and national interdenominational church agencies. His study is well documented.

In Waterville, Maine, in 1891, there was formed the first interchurch state organization. The Evangelical Alliance blazed trails. The Sunday School Movement, which demonstrated various cooperative techniques, receives a chapter in the book. Then follow eight chapters on developments in formal church cooperation, local and state, since 1900. The first period of expansion was 1915-24, Dr. Sanderson states.

After going through "the merging thirties" and "the expectant forties" there came the solid growth of the movement of the nineteen-fifties. In 1959, forty-one state councils reported 166 professional staff workers. Local councils in thirty-four states numbered 215 in 1959, with 551 professional staff workers. The gross annual income of state and local councils increased from over $6,000,000 in 1952 to over $13,000,000 in 1958, the increase being explained in part by an increase in the number of councils during that period. Seven councils, starting from Sunday school association beginnings, have celebrated their hundredth anniversaries.

How shall one interpret what has happened? Among Dr. Sanderson's answers to his own question are these: "Councils of churches seem to thrive in direct proportion to the density of population." "Secular pressures have included urbanization, international strife, depression. . . ." A Protestant community aware of the Roman Catholic population in cities has tended "to seek some solidarity." In the ecumenical era some Christian leaders have striven zealously to make ecumenicity local. A constant ferment is observed in discussion of good relations between the national and the state and local. The state and local interests now have significant representation in national affairs.

State and local organizations have emphasized the practical. Dr. Sanderson recommends moving "from action to thought," and proposes a long list of questions for further consideration and thorough study.

—B. Y. L.

Handbook of Community Service Projects, Audrey R. and Harleigh B. Trecker, Association Press, 1960, $6.50.

Doing something to benefit the community gives meaning to many organizations and gets a lot done in the towns and cities of the United States. From thousands of reports of successful projects, these more than 850 have been analyzed as most practical for all kinds of groups. Covering every kind of community need, the Treckers organize the material carefully into twenty-eight sections and provide an index that can whet the interest of any group.

Projects include those most suitable for children, for adults, for men, for women, for youth; those requiring little or no money; some to be done at home, week end, at meetings; others of a one-time or short-

DR. MUELLER'S GUIDANCE CITED

• The Rev. Dr. E. W. Mueller, secretary of Church in Town and Country for the National Lutheran Council, received the 1961 Distinguished Service Award of the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts at the organization's fifteenth annual convention in Memphis, Tennessee.

The award is given annually to outstanding Americans who have made significant contributions to the advancement of soil and water conservation.

The citation presented by NASCD President Bill Richards reads as follows:

"For continuing and invaluable guidance on behalf of the annual observance of Soil Stewardship Week in America;

"For untiring and selfless efforts to elevate the practice of agriculture and the responsibilities of the husbandman to his community and to God's purpose;

"For spiritual leadership which

has inspired the conservation movement of America over many years; and

"For his far-reaching influence in asserting the social and moral values that are an inseparable part of all responsible conservation effort—

"We, the Officers and Directors of the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts, are privileged and honored to present to the Reverend E. W. Mueller the 1961 Distinguished Service Award of this Association."

A member of the Soil Stewardship Advisory Committee to NASCD for many years, Dr. Mueller also serves as secretary-treasurer of the American Country Life Association; on the board of governors for the establishment of an Agricultural Hall of Fame; and as a member of the Committee on Rural Economic and Social Trends for the National Council of Churches.

A native of Waverly, Iowa, Dr. Mueller now lives in Midlothian, Illinois, a Chicago suburb. He holds degrees from the University of Iowa; Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa; and Augustana Theological Seminary, Rock Island, Illinois. Prior to his service with the National Lutheran Council in Chicago, Dr. Mueller served for thirteen years as a pastor in rural Iowa. ■ ■

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time nature; those involving volunteer service or making things . . . the best experience in one source book.

Journey into Summer, Edwin Way Teale, Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, 1960, $5.95.

It is only on rare occasions that one is permitted to read so engrossing a book as Edwin Way Teale's *Journey Into Summer.* The author is a writer, a naturalist and a photographer. It would be difficult to state in which of the three he is most efficient. Starting in the early spring at Conway, New Hampshire, he and his wife traveled 19,000 miles, back and forth across the United States, ending their journey in the Rocky Mountains in late summer.

Wherever they journeyed they found things of absorbing interest to write about . . . the cranberry tree, foam flowers, the natural history of Niagara Falls and the nonchalant mallard, may-fly island, the miceless house, river of the fireflies, woodpecker blockade, mysterious maples, bears of Copper Harbor, night of the falling stars . . . to name but a few of the wonders of God's world which they accurately describe.

A reader surely cannot help but be awed at this couple's grasp of the multitudinous wonders of nature—not alone the ascetic values but the facts that lie back of these values. Most people supposedly have heard of artesian wells. But how many know that the first such phenomenon was discovered in the province of Artais, France, in 1126 and has flowed without ceasing ever since? And what of the lowering water level in the United States? The preacher of the gospel will find in these 350 pages many illustrations with which to clinch or illuminate some truth he would make clear. The work is beautifully illustrated with fifty-six black-and-white photographs.

—C. R. M.

August 23, 1961

The Rev. Michael P. Dineen,
Director
Country Beautiful
12821 West Blue Mound Road
Brookfield, Wisconsin

Dear Father Dineen:

How does one describe his sense of deep satisfaction for having shared in something of rare beauty and power?

What words can witness to the sound of the heart when it has been deeply stirred?

Why does the pinch of truth leave one all but senseless in its grip?

These are my reactions after an exposure to the first issue of "Country Beautiful." You have my profound gratitude.

With sincerity,
Henry A. McCanna
Executive Director
Department of Town and Country Church

Father, We Thank Thee

U.S.D.A. photo by Madeleine Osborne

A Thanksgiving Meditation by Henry A. McCanna
Combining various Psalms with the hymn "For the Beauty of the Earth"
for the objects of Thanksgiving

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes—
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,
And daub their natural faces unaware
More and more from the first similitude.

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning
From *Aurora Leigh*

Father, We Thank Thee . . .
For the beauty of the earth
PSALM 24:1, 2
For the glory of the skies
PSALM 19:1-6
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies
PSALM 18:1-3
For the beauty of each hour
Of the day and of the night
PSALM 42:6-8
For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild
PSALM 133
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.
PSALM 150

BREAD

Be gentle
When you touch bread.
Let it not lie
Uncared for, unwanted.
So often bread
Is taken for granted.

There is so much beauty
In bread—
Beauty of sun and soil,
Beauty of patient toil.
Winds and rains have caressed it,
Christ often blessed it.

Be gentle
When you touch bread.

—Author unknown.